United Nations

Press Release

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- New Executive Director of International Drug Control Programme calls for effective continuation of activities while units are integrated into single new programme.

- United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees deplores killing of one of its teachers in Gaza Strip.

- Coordinator for follow-up relief to Chernobyl calls 1986 disaster "unique" -- with both causes and effects "invisible".

- United Nations is informed of earthquake in Georgia, Soviet Union.

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Opening its thirty-fourth annual session yesterday in Vienna, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs was addressed by the Executive Director of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, Giorgio Giacomelli, who said it was essential to ensure the effective continuation of ongoing activities while restructuring the Organization's drug control efforts. In the fight against drugs, he said, there was a danger that the international community could find itself going in more than one direction. Therefore, it was important to coordinate the efforts and initiatives of organizations inside and outside the United Nations system.

Addressing the Commission yesterday, the Minister of Justice of Colombia, Jaime Geraldo Angel, said his country remained in the front-line of the war against drugs to which the rest of the world had not yet officially committed itself. Colombia was aware of the need to come up with new ways and means of overcoming the drug crisis, especially by strengthening the judicial system, he said. For example, judges' names were kept secret and they could hear cases with witnesses remaining anonymous.

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For information media—not an official record

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has deplored the killing last week of one of its teachers in the Gaza Strip.

The Agency expressed its concern for the welfare of Agency staff who it said were working in increasingly violent circumstances in the area.

According to UNRWA, the teacher was stabbed 11 times by masked men in broad daylight on the premises of an UNRWA elementary school in Khan Younis camp in full view of pupils. The Agency said the killing came as the culmination of a series of incidents in which UNRWA staff and property had been threatened and attacked by members of the community.

The UNRWA said that since the beginning of the Palestinian uprising, seven staff members had been killed in the Gaza Strip by unidentified assailants. Three of the killings took place on UNRWA premises.

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First-hand impressions of the magnitude of the Chernobyl disaster have been recounted in Vienna by the Director of the United Nations Office in Vienna, and Coordinator for follow-up relief to Chernobyl, Margaret Anstee.

Just back from a week-long visit to the Soviet Union to estimate the long-term social and humanitarian needs of the people affected by the disaster, Miss Anstee told a United Nations press officer that her visit had made an emotional impact on her. She said her mission was concerned with estimating ways of getting people installed in better facilities as soon as possible in uncontaminated areas. It was also concerned with the health of the 600,000 people from all over the country who rallied to become liquidators and to work on the clean-up operation. In addition, areas such as agriculture and industry needed to be closely examined.

Miss Anstee called the disaster "unique", since both its causes and its effects were in some ways invisible. It was not a disaster which could be seen in concrete terms such as an earthquake or a war, bullets or bombs, she said, adding that its implications were long-lasting.

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The Soviet Mission to the United Nations reported today that six districts in the Caucasian Republic of Georgia were hit hard yesterday by an earthquake which killed some 50 people and injured more than 360.

The Mission said in a press release that 80 per cent of hospitals, schools and pre-school institutions were destroyed. More than 2,000 servicemen, medics, mine rescuers, mountain-climbers and other specialists from units of the Transcaucasian military district were participating in the rescue operations. People were being evacuated from the disaster area by helicopter and automobiles.

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